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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUNICH 000068

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/14/2018
TAGS: [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [GM](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: A/S FRIED'S MEETING WITH DUMA COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN
KOSACHEV AND OSTROVSKIY

REF: MUNICH 52

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Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL ERIC G. NELSON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: A/S Fried noted that Deputy Prime Minister Ivanov's Munich speech was a welcome change in tone from other senior Russian statements. The discussion focused primarily on Kosovo. Fried urged Russia to be constructive with Serbia and Kosovo; the U.S. had a disagreement over Kosovo and it was critical that Russia not take steps that would lead to a crisis, e.g., recognizing Abkhazia. Kosachev expressed interest in exploring the difference between a "disagreement" and a "crisis," while also offering standard arguments against Kosovo independence. Ostrovskiy painted a lurid picture of U.S. hegemonial aspirations and proposed a U.S.-Russian division of "spheres of influence." End summary.

Kosachev on Kosovo and its Implications

¶2. (C) Assistant Secretary Dan Fried met February 10 with Duma Committee Chairmen Konstantin Kosachev and Aleksey Ostrovskiy on the margins of the Munich Security Conference. Fried told Kosachev that Deputy Prime Minister Sergey Ivanov's speech to the conference had been constructive in tone, a change from last year's speech by President Putin, and that participants had seen it that way. Fried added that he disagreed with Ivanov's defense of state-led, authoritarian modernization, but noted that at least Ivanov had taken the trouble to make the case in rational terms. Kosachev said there had been a discussion within the Russian delegation about what approach Ivanov should take; a decision was made in favor of the constructive approach, and all were happy with the outcome.

¶3. (C) Kosachev said we had a real test in front of us over Kosovo and said he had heard that Kosovo would declare independence February 17, with recognition by most EU member states the next day. Fried said that he was aware of this speculation but did not confirm it. Kosachev asked whether the U.S. would recognize Kosovo the day after a declaration of independence. Fried told him one would have to assume so.

¶4. (C) Fried said it was clear that Russia and the West had a disagreement over Kosovo. The question was whether the disagreement would become a crisis. If Russia expressed its disagreement with Kosovo independence and did not recognize it, that would be a disagreement only. If Russia recognized Abkhazia as revenge for Kosovo's independence, that would constitute a crisis. Kosachev picked up on this line of thinking and asked whether it would be a crisis or a disagreement if Russia blocked OSCE membership for Kosovo.

¶5. (C) Fried said he thought it would be unfortunate if Russia blocked Kosovo's membership in the UN, although it was clear Russia might take that step. UN membership for Kosovo would strengthen moderate forces in that country. He observed that Russia was not in a position to block Kosovo membership in the World Bank or IMF. Russia would hopefully come to recognize, Fried continued, that we faced a common challenge to strengthen constructive forces in the region and isolate extremists. The U.S. would do its best to support responsible Kosovar leaders. The U.S. was sorry that Serbian Radical Party presidential candidate Nikolic had been received in Moscow.

¶6. (C) The international community would remain in Kosovo -- one of its goals would be to protect the Serb minority, Fried said. The U.S. hoped that Russia would be responsible and would not encourage radical Serbs to cross the border and make trouble on the ground in Kosovo. Kosachev said that Russia would not "stimulate" Serb actions with respect to Kosovo and said Russia would not be "more Serb than the Serbs." Fried noted the U.S. had told Serbia to refrain from adventurism and expected Moscow to do the same with its greater influence with Kostunica. It was in our interests to move Serbia closer to Europe and ensure stability in Kosovo.

¶7. (C) Kosachev shared his view that Kosovo independence

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would be a mistake; by solving a "small problem" in Kosovo, the West would encourage separatism in Russia (Chechnya, e.g.), South Ossetia, and Abkhazia. The Russian problem had less to do with Kosovo itself than with the loss of status of the UNSC, which had not accepted Kosovo's independence. Fried replied that Russia had missed the opportunity to work constructively in the UNSC to obtain a clear statement that Kosovo was not a precedent. Russia had pulled its troops out of Kosovo years ago, and did not have the same stake that Western countries did. The U.S., for its part, would never accept attempts to use Kosovo as a precedent in other regions, whether in the Basque lands, northern Cyprus, Chechnya, or elsewhere.

¶8. (C) Fried said the U.S. wanted to cooperate with Russia on Missile Defense (MD) and CFE. We had listened to Russian concerns, and Secretaries Rice and Gates had responded to them seriously. Fried pointed out that Ivanov's speech had referred to strategic cooperation with the U.S. -- this was important, and he had already informed the Secretary about it. The U.S. and Russia did not have to agree on every issue, but there was more that united us than divided us: counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, and some regional issues among them.

Ostrovskiy Pleads for U.S.-Russian Condominium

¶9. (C) Ostrovskiy, who had been silent up to that point, told Fried that the U.S. was making a "big mistake" by continuing a "cold war" against Russia. The U.S. desire for global hegemony would in the end damage U.S. interests, since that goal was unachievable. Attempts by the USG to minimize Russian influence in Central Asia and the southern Caucasus would be counterproductive and stoke Islamic extremism. Already, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and potentially in Iran, the U.S. was overstretched. Ostrovskiy proposed that the U.S. and Russia divide up spheres of influence and establish a

bi-polar world order.

¶10. (C) Fried told Ostrovskiy that he misunderstood U.S. foreign policy, which did not aspire to control the globe, either on its own or with others. The U.S. favored an open, liberal order, in which we could cooperate with many countries, especially democracies.

¶11. (C) Ostrovskiy expressed admiration for American democracy, but said Georgian President Saakashvili was a "dictator;" the presidential elections were completely falsified. President Putin was a hundred times better, he asserted. Fried pointed out that the U.S., and ODIHR, had been critical of flaws in the Georgian presidential election. We hoped that the parliamentary election would be better. But in Georgia, Fried pointed out, one did not know the outcome of an election in advance; this contrasted with some other countries.

¶12. (U) This cable was cleared with A/S Fried and coordinated with Embassy Berlin.

¶13. (U) For more information on the 44th Conference and past conferences, visit: "<http://www.securityconference.de>".

¶14. (U) Previous reporting from Munich is available on our SIPRNET website at www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/munich/.
NELSON